AIPAC SPEECH 2013 – MINISTER OF DEFENSE

EHUD BARAK (1,590 WORDS) – DRAFT 9

- Thank you for such a warm welcome.
- What an indescribable feeling to be surrounded by so many **true friends** in the capital of the world's greatest democracy.
- Members of the Administration, Members of Congress, distinguished ambassadors …. Michael, Rosey, Bob, David, Howard and Richard, AIPAC members… older and young…
- Good evening to **you all** and thank you for having me.
- Members of Congress,It is **your** toil and **your** graft – **your** unwavering support – that keeps ***us*** safe. I have six humble words for all of you: Thank you, thank you, thank you.
- I would like to express my personal appreciation to President Obama and Secretary Panetta for their **resolute** backing of Israel.

- History will surely record your immeasurable contribution to the **strength** of Israel and the

maintenance of the **truly** special relationship between our peoples.

- On behalf of the people of Israel, I wish Secretary Hagel **all the best** in his new role.
- As Secretary of Defense he will no doubt **serve his country** with the **same pride** and **honor** with which he served both on the battlefield and in Congress.
- I am surprised to see **so many young activists**. Thank you for **your energetic** (and loud) commitment to Israel!
- A **commitment** which is so lucidly **dictated** by the **head**… yet so deeply underpinned by the **heart**…

- It is thanks to the **rock solid** US-Israel relationship, and the devotion of the young men and women in the uniform of the IDF, that our capacity to defend ourselves, that is to say - Israel's 'Qualitative – Military – Edge', has been guaranteed for years to come!

- With **US** support and the **ingenuity** of our scientists, Israel finds itself at the cutting edge of missile defense technology.
- The 'Iron Dome' recently intercepted over 400 incoming terrorist rockets.
- Practically hitting a bullet with a bullet!
- Just last week, we – the US **and** Israel – conducted a successful **exo**-atmospheric test of the Arrow 3 interceptor.
- The State of Israel simply would not be **the strong island of stability** without one crucial **constant.**
- YOU
- The United States of America. Its people. Its leadership. Its Jewish community.

- We live in a tough neighborhood.
- I will never grow tired of repeating these harsh realities: Where **we** live, there is **no mercy for the**

weak. There **is no second chance** for those who cannot defend themselves.

- Israel is the **strongest** country in the region and the only **genuinely open democracy**; a "villa in the jungle" as I once called it.
- An **unprecedented geopolitical earthquake** in the last three years has shattered the generations' old regional order.
- There are two clear lessons and one insight I have draw from this period:

    - # 1: **Be modest with predictions, especially about the future**. Take Egypt as an example; if even Mubarak was unable to predict it… who could have?

    - #2: When friends tell me: **Don't worry**… If worse comes to worst … the world will step forward and act!
    - My answer is: Do NOT take this for granted.

- Look at Syria – you need no intelligence; it's on your screens. Assad's jet fighters, tanks and artillery are slaughtering his own citizens. Over 70,000 Syrians killed.
- Yet there is still **no** sense of direction and **no** political will to act.
- There is an extremely relevant lesson here for us in Israel.

- And an **insight**…
- Many believe that the root cause for *all* the problems in the Middle East… is our **inability** to solve the conflict with the Palestinians.
- I say… That's not true!
- The recent tectonic movements in the Middle East have been beyond our control and independent of our deeds.
- Even if a peace agreement with the Palestinians had been signed and sealed a long time ago:

- The Muslim Brotherhood would **still** have come to power in Egypt
- Syria would **still** be mired in a bloody civil war
- Iran would **still** be pursuing nuclear capabilities and a hegemonic role in the Gulf

- Let's first turn to the greatest challenge facing Israel, the region and the world today…
- Iran is **racing** towards nuclear capabilities.
- A nuclear Iran spells the end of **any** conceivable non-proliferation regime. **Saudi Arabia**, **Turkey** and later on **Egypt** will eventually follow suit. Later even terrorist groups may try. Including proxies like **Hezbollah** in Lebanon and **Islamic Jihad** in the Gaza Strip.
- Diplomatic efforts continue. Sanctions are **unprecedented and hurting**, but frankly – while exhausting all diplomatic means is understandable – I do not believe it will lead to a "moment of truth", where the Ayatollahs will give up their nuclear aspirations.

- Therefore, **all options must remain** on the table.

- We have stated this time and again.

- And we expect **all those** who say it… to **mean** it… ladies and gentlemen… **We mean it.**

- And I repeat it once again, **we mean it**.

- A nuclear Iran is the **most** imminent and acute danger to the stability of the **entire region**. But it is not the only one. There are **at least** another two:
- Radical Islamist **terror** is spreading rapidly.
- Likewise, **Missile Defense** is becoming a growing need for other **moderate states** in the region.

- So what is to be done?
- It is an interregnum right now in Israel and the new government will have to shape its approach – but allow me, just before I leave, to share with you my positions.
- The Middle East is a **Gestalt** – everything depends on everything else.
- Facing the **triangle of threats** we have to:

- Firstly start building a **‘Regional Security Framework’**…
- This should be built around the **common** challenges – of **radical Islamist terror**, **border security**, **missile defense**… and of course, Iran.
- And being led by the US, it could provide a **variety of synergies** for all its regional participants.
- Secondly, we need a **daring peace initiative** vis-a-vis the Palestinians.
- A two-state solution is the only viable solution.
- It is a **compelling imperative** for us in order to secure **our** identity and future as a Jewish and democratic state; it’s not a favor for the Palestinians…
- Believe me I know from personal experience that the Palestinians are not **easy** partners for peace.
- And they clearly bear most of the responsibility for past failures
- Well, I know a fully fledged agreement is probably not feasible today, But if this is the case – and only a sincere effort can determine this – we have to try and achieve a reasonable, fair, **interim agreement**.

- I strongly believe this is possible – while guaranteeing our security and vital interests.
- But **if <u>even an interim agreement</u>** is unobtainable, then we should consider **unilateral steps** in order to place a **<u>wedge</u>** on this extremely dangerous slippery slope towards a **binational** state.
- It involves **demarcating** a line within the land of Israel… Within which we will have the settlement blocs and a **solid** Jewish majority for generations to come.
- Setting security arrangements and a solid Israeli, long-term **military presence** along the River Jordan
- **<u>Rest assured</u>**… our security should not – AND WILL NOT – be compromised under any of these alternatives.
- Tough decisions must be taken; but **<u>it is</u>** possible.
- And as our sages taught us: *"If not now… **when**?"*

- I **strongly** believe that this strategic intertwined triangle:
- First: The Regional Security Framework

- Second: A resumed political process with the Palestinians…
- And third: tackling Iran.
- This triangle is the most effective approach to deal with the challenges on our horizon.

- Israel has been experiencing its own tremors of change.
- Just under two years ago the people of Israel took to the streets… demanding a more equal sharing of the pie.
- Just last month **53** new, fresh members of the Knesset were sworn in, about half the serving members of Knesse**t …** (Present company included!)**… OUT**.
- **That** is what I call democracy in action. A democracy *I* can be proud of. A democracy *you* can be proud of.
- Ladies and gentlemen, I was born 71 years ago at the height of World War Two, the Nazi crematoria in Europe were working day and night.

- And now I am ending my tenure as the Minister of Defense of a strong **independent Jewish state.**
- Look at what we – as a nation – have achieved… all in under 65 years. Who would have believed it then?
- An **agile** and **adaptive** high-tech and export oriented economy.
- Our start-up culture flourishes on an ***eruption*** of talent and an underlying entrepreneurial spirit.
- **I am optimistic and my vision for Israel is clear**:
- A **strong**, self-confident, flourishing Jewish, democratic state, living in peace and security with its neighbors.
- An exemplary **state** and world leader in science, technology, education and culture.
- A country in which **our** children will **want** to live and **your** children will be PROUD to be associated with.
- Ladies and gentlemen, we are at a **decisive juncture in our history**…
- I believe we possess the **strength** and **courage** to make those tough decisions for the future **peace** and **security** of the State of Israel.

- Please allow me to end with the millennia old blessing:

השם עוז לעמו ייתן, השם יברך את עמו בשלום

  - May the Lord bestow his people with courage, and may the Lord bless his people with peace.

- Thank you…